

**IOWA DEPARTMENT FOR THE BLIND**  
Budget Presentation  
Education Joint Appropriations Subcommittee  
January 29, 2003

Independent Living Rehabilitation Program

Studies conducted by the Alliance on Aging Research reveal that visual impairment ranks as one of the top four reasons seniors lose their independence. The Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR) program exists to reverse this tide by providing services that promote the self-sufficiency, personal control, and self-confidence necessary for individuals to live independently and participate actively in the environment of their choice. Key to this success is the provision of specialized training in non-visual techniques necessary to accomplish activities of daily living. Rehabilitation teachers travel the state to provide this training and other blindness-related services to individuals in their homes and communities. As Iowa's population ages, the demand for services continues to climb. In fact, individuals aged 65 or older account for nearly 75% of new referrals to the Department. Last year the ILR program served over 1200 elderly or multiply-disabled persons who are blind. The majority (68%) were aged 80 or older.

Adult Orientation and Adjustment Center

The Center is a residential program that provides intensive blindness training to blind Iowans who want to remain full participants in their families and communities. Each year, approximately forty adult students take classes in industrial arts, travel with the long white cane, home and personal management, Braille, and computers so that they can develop the self-confidence and learn the skills they need to live independently and work competitively.

Business Enterprises Program

The Business Enterprises Program enables blind persons in Iowa to independently operate food service businesses in a variety of settings—primarily federal, state, county, and municipal buildings. In this endeavor, the blind person is a self-employed individual responsible for the usual business responsibilities—paying payroll and sales taxes, ordering merchandise, hiring employees, bookkeeping, pricing, setting employee hours and duties, customer service, and maintaining and repairing equipment. Businesses consist of cafeterias, full-line in-house vending, and 14 roadside rest area vending facilities. As in any self-employment endeavor, emphasis is on customer service, sanitation, quality food at a competitive price, and making a fair profit.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The vocational rehabilitation program is a vital part of a service delivery system that enables blind Iowans to enter the workforce on a par with their sighted peers and thus to become taxpaying citizens rather than tax consumers. Vocational rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation teachers, and access technology experts work closely with persons who are blind to meet their needs for vocational and technical training, higher education, and non-visual access technology. The program provides job placement assistance, job accommodations, and important job-seeking skills training. It is through the vocational rehabilitation program that Iowa's blind youth transition from secondary

education to become self-sufficient income producing citizens. With the vocational rehabilitation program, many blind Iowans become small business owners, providing services and products to Iowa and the nation. Another valuable aspect of the program is job retention--that is, providing services to blind or newly-blind Iowans who are already employed to help them keep the jobs they already have.

In fiscal year 2002, the Department rehabilitated 140 persons who entered employment at an average hourly wage of \$12.61. These blind Iowans are working, paying taxes, and contributing to the Social Security system. Examples of the positions that were obtained or retained include: accountant, certified nursing assistant, newspaper circulation manager, director of career placement, lawyer, information technology specialist, and school teacher.

In addition to providing increased independence and confidence to blind Iowans, vocational rehabilitation services also result in substantial savings to state government. They also help to reduce the staggering 70% unemployment rate which has, over the years, had a deleterious effect upon blind Americans of working age.

### Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

It's more than just a library. It's a portal to the printed word. The library circulates books and magazines on tape, in Braille, and in large print. But there's more—the college student's textbook; the seventh-grader's math work sheets; the counselor's dictionary of drugs; the interviewee's test; the law school applicant's study materials; the retired person's prescription information; the church choir member's hymnal; the citizen's VCR instruction manual; the Boy Scout's handbook. Through its network of over 100 volunteers, and its specialized staff, the library makes printed materials accessible to Iowa's blind, visually impaired, physically disabled, and reading-disabled citizens of all ages. With our help, Iowans who cannot read standard print can still study in Iowa's schools and colleges, work in Iowa's offices, stores and factories, and manage the details of their personal lives. In calendar year 2002, the Library filled 1,710 requests for materials needed for school, work, and personal independence. In addition, the library circulated over 325,000 books, videos, and magazines in alternative formats to Iowans who cannot read standard print.

### Current Issue Brief Maintenance of Effort

34 CFR 361.62 provides that the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education will reduce the amount otherwise payable to a state for a fiscal year by the amount by which the total expenditures from non-federal sources under the state plan for the previous fiscal year were less than the total of those expenditures for the fiscal year two years prior to the previous fiscal year.

In other words, a maintenance of effort penalty imposed by the Secretary is a dollar-for-dollar forfeit of federal funds equal to the state's deficiency in its own support of rehabilitation services for Iowa's blind citizens and is in addition to the loss of federal matching funds in the second previous year when the violation occurs.

State general fund appropriations are now insufficient to satisfy the Department's maintenance of effort requirements in federal law. The Department's budget request for 2004 and 2005 contains an increase of \$ 134,608 to address this issue.

Were state revenues sufficient, the Department would have included an additional \$ 61,314 per year.